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SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL AND SCA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: AHMADIYA COMMUNITY UNTOUCHED BY WEEKEND  
DEMONSTRATIONS; SOME PROTESTERS AND POLICE INJURED

1. The International Khatme Nabuwat Movement Bangladesh (IKNMB) and a splinter organization, Khatme Nabuwat Andolon Bangladesh (KNAB) staged protests this weekend over the government's refusal to declare Ahmadiyas non-Muslims. When they attempted to march towards the Dhaka City Central Jail and the Ahmadiya complex in Old Dhaka, they were stopped by police firing tear gas and wielding batons. As the BDG promised, they allowed no marches to approach the Ahmadiya complex, hang signs outside their mosques, or harm any members of the community. Newspaper reports state approximately 50 protesters and seven police officers were injured in clashes. Most of those injured required only first aid, and none of the injured was reported in serious condition.

2. In conversations with Poloff, Ahmadiya leaders expressed relief that the police successfully defended the community. This contrasts with some past demonstrations, when police helped to hang the protesters' banners with anti-Ahmadiya slogans. The Ahmadiyas would now like to see the BDG take a more proactive stand, by punishing those who threaten violence against them. However, when asked about the possibility of going after IKNMB and KNAB before they march, the State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shajahan said that the BDG was too busy right now with the recent bombings.

3. Despite claims from one of the KNAB leaders that his 60 lakh (6,000,000) followers were ready to die defending true Islam, only about 1000 people joined the march. Press, civil society, and the general population seem to believe that the Ahmadiyas ought to be left in peace. Members of prominent human rights organizations such as Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) stayed at the Ahmadiya compound to ensure its safety.

4. Comment: The BDG's decision to engage protesters well away from the Ahmadiya complex was the most robust BDG response yet to threats against the Ahmadiya community. It demonstrates once again that the BDG has the ability to resist Islamic fundamentalists when it has the will to do so. In part, this may reflect the BDG's desire to distance itself from JMB's violent, fundamentalist agenda. For now, at least, the BDG sees value in protecting the rights of this religious minority.

GEORGE